



GETTING ALONG: TIPS FOR SUCCEEDING IN A DIVERSE WORKPLACE

Today's workplace no longer looks like a 60's TV show. These days, workplaces are more reflective of the diversity of the population at large, where differences of ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, culture, etc. are common.

Businesses that employ a diverse workforce can benefit from a broader range of perspectives and experience, but only if they create and maintain a positive work environment in which diverging views are respected and valued. As an employee, you can help!

Consider these tips:

LISTEN CAREFULLY

Do you know the difference between hearing and listening? While *hearing* is the act of perceiving sound, *listening* means taking the time to understand the meaning of what's being said. To better understand your colleagues:

- » Hear people out before interjecting your point of view. By formulating responses in your head before the speaker is done, you may end up wasting time addressing a non-concern and run the risk of missing the point entirely.
- » Make the speaker your primary focus. If you type on a computer or check a text message from a friend when someone else is speaking, the speaker may feel slighted.
- » Repeat key points in your own words to ensure mutual understanding. In addition to keeping the conversation on track, you send the message that you've been listening.

PRACTICE OPEN-MINDEDNESS

Do you find yourself quick to label anything new or different as wrong? By doing so, you may squelch new, potentially valuable ideas. Help others feel safe voicing their thoughts by:

- » Avoiding labels
- » Encouraging participation
- » Respecting all ideas and seeking common understanding

LEVERAGE DIFFERENCES

Although many people find conflict uncomfortable, it can actually be a healthy way to bring teams closer together, foster improved understanding between diverse groups and create win-win solutions. Avoiding differences creates an atmosphere of "walking on eggshells," negatively affecting the self-esteem of team members and causing resentment.

To keep conflict constructive, keep in mind that solutions are best created collaboratively; they must be fair to all. When resolving conflict, remember:

- » Take some time to put your thoughts together.
- » Get straight to the heart of the matter rather than practicing avoidance.
- » Refrain from personal attacks.

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R-E-S-P-E-C-T

The essence of diversity management is respect. Show the same respect for your co-workers' different backgrounds, belief systems and preferences that you would want for yourself. When you take the time to learn about other people, it's not only your work that benefits – you can also broaden your horizons and find new inspiration for your daily life.

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Stressed out by workplace conflicts? Call your EAP!

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